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# Instant Guide to San Francisco

## The Waterfront

4 hours on the go

Fodor's



San Francisco makes it wonderfully easy to tap into the Good Life. With the hot arts scene, the tempting boutiques, and the awesome bay views, it's the perfect place to indulge. The Waterfront has terrific sightseeing opportunities and smaller areas with personalities all their own, from the kitschy Fisherman's Wharf to busy Pier 39. The Ferry Building draws locals with its culinary pleasures. Between the Ferry Building and Pier 39 a former maritime no-man's land is filling in a bit—especially near Pier 33, where the perpetually booked Alcatraz cruises depart—with restored pedestrian-friendly piers.

### GET HERE FAST

The Powell-Hyde and Powell-Mason cable-car lines both end near Fisherman's Wharf. F-line trolleys, often packed to capacity, run all the way down Market to the Embarcadero, then north to the Wharf.

### DON'T MISS

■ **The Ferry Building:** The 230-foot clock tower, built in the late 19th century, was modeled after the campaniles of cathedrals in Seville, Spain. San Franciscans flock to the street-level Market Hall, stocking up on food and gifts. From the piers on the north side of the building south to the Bay Bridge, the waterfront promenade is a favorite among joggers and picnickers, with a front-row view of the sailboats slipping by.

■ **Hyde Street Pier:** If you want to get to the heart of the Wharf—and see boats—there's no better place to do it than here. Feel the rocking of the waves aboard the gorgeously restored 19th-century *Balclutha*, an 1886 full-rigged three-masted sailing vessel more than 250 feet long that sailed around Cape Horn 17 times. Park rangers teach visitors to raise the sails.

■ **Alcatraz:** Thousands of visitors come every day to walk in the footsteps of Alcatraz's notorious criminals. The stories of life and death on "the Rock" may sometimes be exaggerated, but it's almost impossible to resist the chance to wander the cellblock that tamed the

country's toughest gangsters and saw daring escape attempts of tremendous desperation.

### QUICK HITS

■ **Ghirardelli Square:** Most of the red-brick buildings in this early-20th-century complex were once part of the Ghirardelli chocolate factory. There are no fewer than three Ghirardelli stores here, as well as gift shops.

■ **Hop an F-line Trolley:** The city's system of vintage electric trolleys gives the cable cars a run for their money as San Francisco's best-loved mode of transportation. Each car is unique, restored to the colors of its city of origin, from New Orleans and Philadelphia to Moscow and Milan.

### SHOPPING BLITZ

■ **Jackson Square:** Clustered in the shadow of the Transamerica building, the city's finest retail antiques dealers occupy three-story brick buildings, some of which date to the city's gold-rush days. A few modern design houses have joined the mix of intimate showrooms targeting serious collectors of tribal rugs, botanical prints, and antique silver.

■ **Helper's Bazaar:** This is the city's best bet for high-end vintage clothing. A red Bill Blass cocktail dress and a Chanel bag are among the masterpieces you might expect to find here.



■ **Lotus Collection:** The handmade pillows and Japanese brocades make this one of the finest collections of decorative antique textiles in the States. It's also a secret source for the city's interior designers.

### IN-THE-KNOW

Save time and buy your tickets in advance for **Alcatraz**. Prepay by credit card then pick up your ticket at the "will call" window at Pier 33 up to an hour before sailing. Get even more out of the Alcatraz experience by visiting at night. The evening tour has programs that aren't offered during the day, plus you'll catch the bridge-to-bridge view of the city. The bay is a huge part of San Francisco's charm, and getting out on the water gives you a stunning perspective of the city. A commuter ferry is cheaper than a cruise and just as lovely.

